Sale of Andhra Tobacco

1252. SHRI YERRA NARAYANASWAMY: Will the Minister of COMMERCE be pleased to refer to news-item published in the Economic Times, dated the 17th February, 1999 captioned "Better Quality seen in Andhra Pradesh Tobacco Sale":

(a) whether it is a fact that the quality of Andhra Tobacco is very high this year;

(b) if so, whether the Tobacco Board has made any efforts to get higher prices for the Tobacco;

(c) the manner in which Government propose to ensure good prices for this high quality tobacco;

(d) whether any proposal has come from the Tobacco Board; and

(e) if so, the details thereof?

THE MINISTER OF COMMERCE (SHRI RAMAKRISHNA HEGDE): (a) The estimated production of bright grade tobacco in Andhra Pradesh is 70% which is higher than the previous year;

(b) and (c) Tobacco Board operates auction platforms for sale of tobacco to generate competition amongst the buyers to obtain best prices for the growers. Tobacco Board encourages buyers to participate in auctions and help seek international markets for FCV tobacco through participation in international trade fairs, arranging buyer-seller meets and sponsoring delegations abroad. Efforts are also being made to ensure exports of larger quantity of tobacco to Russia under the debt repayment route. Improvement in exports is likely to result in better price realisation by the tobacco growers.

(d) and (e) Tobacco Board has sent proposals to help expand markets by participation in International fairs and sending delegations to prospective overseas markets.

Quality of Tobacco

1253. SHRI YERRA NARAYANASWAMY: Will the Minister of COMMERCE be pleased to state:

(a) whether the Tobacco Board has analysed or estimated the quality and grade of tobacco expected in Andhra Pradesh this year;

(b) if so, what would be the expected improvement in 1999 crop over the 1998 crop in the highest quality grades in Andhra Pradesh;

(c) the percentage share of the low quality grades in the 1998 and 1999 seasons; and

(d) whether Government have noted the problems of tobacco farmers of Andhra Pradesh with regard to exports?

THE MINISTER OF COMMERCE (SHRI RAMAKRISHNA HEGDE): (a) to (c) The estimated grade outturn of the FCV tobacco in Andhra Pradesh in 1999 as compared to the previous years is as follows:

	% Production			
Grade	1996	1997	1998	1999 (Estimated)
Bright	59.79	54.71	31.03	70.00
Medium	26.73	30.33	34.39	20.00
Low	13.48	14.96	34.58	10.00
Total	100.00	100.00	100.00	100.00

(d) Yes, Sir. Government is aware that securing markets for tobacco traders deserves assistance. Tobacco exports are mainly undertaken by the private traders/ exporters. Efforts are being made by the Government to ensure exports of larger quantity of tobacco to Russia under the Debt Repayment route and to other markets through participation in fairs, arranging buyer-seller meets and arranging visits of delegations abroad.